

## **Edwards: All Children of Fallen Heroes to Receive "Fry" College Scholarship Under War Supplemental Signed into Law by President**

*Provision Covers Full Cost of College for Surviving Military Children*

(Washington, D.C.) - A provision authored by Congressman Chet Edwards to expand GI Bill benefits to children of fallen U.S. service members was included in the final 2009 Supplemental Appropriations bill, which funds U.S. military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Senate passed the final bill 91 to 5 after the House passed it 226 to 202. The bill was signed into law by the President today.

The provision, authored by Edwards as a member of the conference committee, expands the current GI Bill education benefit to cover the full cost of a college education for all children of fallen soldiers.

The new benefit will be known as the "Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry" scholarship in honor of a fallen soldier with three young children from Edwards' district.

"Nothing can make up for the loss of a parent, but my hope is that this sends a message of respect to every serviceman and woman that when you go into harm's way for your country, our

prayer is that you don't have to give your life, but if that happens, we're not going to forget your children," said Edwards, Chairman of the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee. "No one has sacrificed more than the military child who has lost a parent."

Under the current GI bill, beneficiaries must serve 6 years with an additional 4 year commitment in order to earn the right to transfer their benefits among their dependents. Edwards' provision extends the full benefit to each dependent child and does not impose a minimum of military service to qualify.

"This legislation is as meaningful to me as any legislation I've ever passed because who could be more deserving of our support than children whose moms or dads have died in military service to our nation," said Edwards. "If a parent gives their life in service to country, their surviving family members shouldn't be forced to choose which child gets to go to college."

One such parent was Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry, of Lorena, Texas, a dedicated soldier who saved countless lives by disarming numerous bombs, including one of the largest car bombs found in Fallujah. On March 8, 2006, after being cleared to return home, Sergeant Fry volunteered to defuse one more explosive device in Anbar province, Iraq. He found three bombs that night and defused all of them, but the fourth took his life. As one of Edwards' constituents, the congressman met Fry's three small children, Kathryn, Gideon, and C.L. at events honoring their father's life beginning with a Veterans Day memorial in 2007. Edwards was deeply moved by the depth of their sacrifice, and was inspired to author the legislation.

"Sergeant Fry wasn't the only one to sacrifice for his country that night. His three children lost their loving father and his wife lost her husband," said Edwards. "Having represented Fort Hood for the first 14 of my 18 years in Congress, I have seen firsthand the sacrifice of our military families, who are truly the unsung heroes of our nation's defense."

### How "Fry" Scholarship Changes GI Bill Benefits

Amends the 9-11 GI Bill, so that children of active duty service members who have died on active duty since 9-11-01 qualify for the education benefit.

Under the current GI bill, beneficiaries must serve 6 years with an additional 4 year commitment in order to earn the right to transfer their benefits among their dependents. Under the Fry scholarship, the full benefit is extended to each dependent child and does not impose a minimum service requirement to qualify.

Under Fry benefit, all children of fallen soldiers are eligible to receive maximum benefit under GI Bill immediately. Under current GI Bill, a service member must serve 3 years in order to receive the full benefit.

Benefit expires 15 years after 18th birthday of surviving military children.

### Current Post-9/11 GI Bill Provisions

Covers tuition and fees of up to the maximum in-state tuition and fees at a public institution in your state;

A monthly housing allowance at the location of the school, based on the Basic Allowance for Housing for an E-5 with dependents; and

An annual books and supplies stipend of up to \$1,000.

### Background on Marine Gunnery Sergeant John David Fry:

Born in Lorena in 1977, John David Fry joined the Marines to serve his country at the age of 18. At the time, the Marines were looking for a few good men. In him they found the best of the best. Sergeant Fry chose to become an explosive ordinance disposal technician, an EOD, to protect the lives of his fellow Marines.

In September of 2005, Sergeant Fry was deployed to Iraq with the 8th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, II Marine Expeditionary Force out of Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. While in Iraq, Sergeant Fry saved countless lives by rendering safe numerous bombs, including one of the largest car bombs found in Fallujah. He once went into a home to find a bomb strapped to a mentally retarded young Iraqi boy, who had been beaten and chained to a wall. Sgt. Fry, the father of three young children, risked his life to save the life of someone else's child in a foreign land. That is the kind of person he was.

Sergeant Fry turned down a Bronze Star and a ticket out of Iraq after a serious wound. He said he just wanted to do what he was supposed to do. He was proud to be a Marine and proud to serve his country. Seven short days before this 28-year-old Marine was to be sent back home to his family, he volunteered, when he didn't have to, to defuse one more explosive device, this time in Al Anbar province. Sergeant Fry found three bombs that night and defused all of them, but the insurgents had hidden a fourth bomb. It exploded and this brave Marine who had saved so many lives, finally gave his own life.

Sergeant Fry wasn't the only one to sacrifice for his country that night. His mother lost a son. His wife lost her husband, and his three children lost their loving father. Only the heart can measure the depth of that kind of sacrifice. Sergeant Fry's widow Malia, and his children, Kathryn, Gideon and C.L., might not have worn our nation's uniform, but they have surely served our country through their deep, personal sacrifice.

The Fry College Scholarship not only honors the sacrifice of America's fallen heroes, it honors the sacrifice of their surviving children.

Edwards co-chairs the House Army Caucus, and serves as the Chairman of the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee.

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